

From: Paul Baker
To: sonjapoet12@comcast.net
Date: 9/1/2010 10:06 AM
Subject: Re: Tar Sands

sent by e mail 9/7/10
 M1047/0090
 cc Leslie
 Task 3659

Thank you for your comments. Many or all of the issues you raise deal with policy decisions, but Oil, Gas and Mining's review dealt with technical issues, such as erosion control, stability, protection of ground water, the reclamation plan, etc. The legislature is responsible for setting policy of the nature discussed in your e mail. (See further discussion about policy issues near the end of the message.)

The legislative findings in the Utah Mined Land Reclamation Act state (UCA 40-8-2):

- (1) A mining industry is essential to the economic and physical well-being of the state of Utah and the nation.
- (2) It is necessary to alter the surface of the earth to extract minerals required by our society, but this should be done in such a way as to minimize undesirable effects on the surroundings.
- (3) Mined land should be reclaimed so as to prevent conditions detrimental to the general safety and welfare of the citizens of the state and to provide for the subsequent use of the lands affected. Reclamation requirements must be adapted to the diversity of topographic, chemical, climatic, biologic, geologic, economic, and social conditions in the areas where mining takes place.

The purpose of the Act is:

40-8-3. Purpose.

The purpose of this act is to provide that from the effective date of the act, except as otherwise provided in this act, all mining in the state shall include plans for reclamation of the land affected.

Oil, coal, minerals, and natural gas extraction, in general, benefit us in many ways contributing to our standard of living. About 2000 people are employed by companies that mine coal in Utah plus those that supply equipment and materials for the coal mines. This is of direct benefit to their families and communities. Without coal mining, there would be little industry in Carbon and Emery counties, and it is also of major impact to San Pete and Sevier counties. Most of Utah's electricity comes from coal mined in Utah.

Similar things can be said of the oil and gas and minerals extraction industries. Utah is the third leading producer of minerals products in the country (behind Nevada and Arizona), and these industries have a huge impact on our economy, more than most people realize.

You ask whether we--I assume as Utahns--benefit from having these industries other than the economic impacts. This is an interesting philosophical question: Is the land in Utah of such value that we should mine and produce oil and gas elsewhere and forego that development here? This is basically what happened at the Escalante/Grand Staircase National Monument. The area contains huge low sulfur coal reserves, but it was decided that other values outweighed the value of the coal.

As mentioned previously, it is not the place of the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining to set these policies but to see that the law is enforced. I firmly believe that the PR Springs tar sands mine can be successfully reclaimed and that there will be little impact to ground or surface water while it is operating (assuming it receives final approval and begins operations). That doesn't mean there won't be other impacts. Wildlife habitat will be lost during the operations, but I know of no long-term, irreparable damage to wildlife populations. There will be a scar on the landscape. I'm always surprised at how large the scar looks, especially for a 200-acre site, but one of our main purposes as an agency is to make sure the site is properly reclaimed.

I recognize this e mail is not entirely satisfactory to you, but I hope it explains the purpose of Oil, Gas and Mining. Let me know if I can answer any other questions. I have not yet heard a final decision on the hearing.

>>> <sonjapoet12@comcast.net> 7/27/2010 11:05 AM >>>

Dear Paul and others facing this difficult decision:

I am a citizen of this beautiful state.

Utah has been producing fossil fuels for years. We provide all forms of fossil fuel to the citizens of this state and others. We have refineries in the neighborhoods north of Salt Lake. We have and are doing our part.

Other than jobs and tax revenues from workers and hopefully those profiting from these polluting industries, how will toxic tar sands excavation benefit Utahns? You are a Utah State Division, right? Do we benefit from having our own oil, coal, and natural gas extraction now? Do we benefit from having our very own refineries? Do we pay less for gas? No, we have even paid more than the national average for weeks at a time.

That aside and to the point. What possible need and/or justifications are there for allowing a Canadian company to destroy pristine lands within the watershed of the Colorado River?

I support the Boards decision to refuse this Canadian proposal and I believe the millions who rely on the Colorado River for life sustaining waters support you, too.

Sometimes, preserving life and the resources that support life must trump profits and revenues. If nothing else, the Gulf of Mexico gusher, the recent oil shale refinery explosions within 15 miles of Salt Lake City, and our recent oil spill have proven that, yes, things can go wrong.

The Colorado River is too big to risk.

Thank you for your consideration of the publics concerns. I certainly don't envy your responsibilities and can only imagine the pressures you may be under to allow this potential environmental tragedy to transpire.

Sincerely,
Sonja Mitchell